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For Immediate release - May 01, 2012

GOVERNOR PATRICK LAUNCHES "PLANT SOMETHING" INITIATIVE

Celebrates May as Flower and Nursery Month



Governor Patrick plants flowers with students at the launch of the "Plant Something" initiative. (Photo credit: Eric Haynes / Governor's Office). View additional [photos](#).

BOSTON – Tuesday, May 1, 2012 – Governor Deval Patrick, Massachusetts Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Richard K. Sullivan and Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) Commissioner Greg Watson today joined students, school officials and members of the state's horticulture industry at the Mather Elementary School in Dorchester to launch the "Plant Something" campaign to spotlight local flower and nursery growers and encourage residents to shop at local garden centers.

Governor Patrick also announced May as Flower and Nursery Month, highlighting the state's strong agricultural sector.

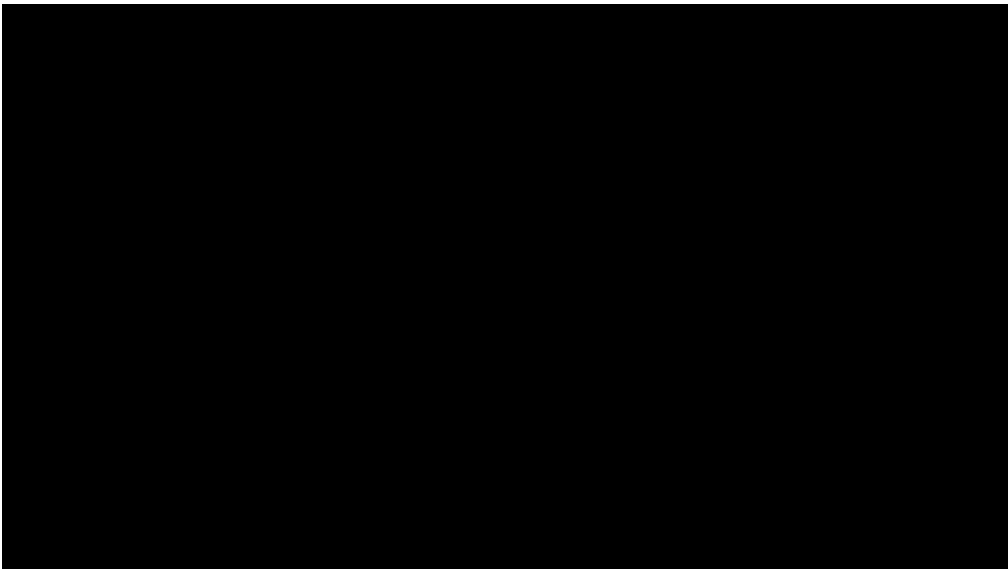
"It gives me great pleasure to recognize a \$2 billion industry that helps to beautify Massachusetts and kick-off a program that will help enhance the outdoor learning experience for students here at the Mather School," said Governor Patrick. "I encourage everyone to go out and 'Plant Something.'"

The Mather Elementary School participates in the Boston Schoolyard Initiative (BSI), a program that revitalizes Boston's schoolyards, transforming asphalt lots into dynamic centers for recreation, learning and community life. Members from the Massachusetts Flower Growers Association (MFGA) and the Massachusetts Nursery and Landscape Association (MNLA) generously donated the greenery for the school yard.

"This is a great way to spotlight beautification projects at schools throughout the Commonwealth," said Secretary Sullivan. "To have our children involved and planting flowers and trees only adds to their interactive hands on education."

The "Plant Something" initiative is being highlighted with the collaboration between DAR, MFGA and MNLA. Slogans will be featured across the state at independent garden centers, delivery trucks and at the MBTA's commuter rail stations and trains during the month of May.

"With spring here and Mother's Day approaching, now is the perfect time to select flowers, hanging baskets, flowering shrubs or trees at one of the independent garden centers across the state," said DAR Commissioner Greg Watson.



The greenhouse and nursery industry is the top contributor to Massachusetts agriculture, valued at \$177 million in 2008 or 31 percent of the total cash receipts in the state, according to the New England Agricultural Statistics Service.

MFGA President Cindy Bertrand, of The Farmer's Daughter at Hillcrest Farm in Auburn, notes that Association members offer consumers a tremendous selection of quality flowers and plants.

"We want to make gardening easy, fun and successful for our customers," she said. "We can give them individualized attention and knowledgeable advice on choosing what will work best for them so their gardens will burst with dazzling color. And with Mother's Day coming up on Sunday, May 13, what could be a better gift in honor of those special mothers in our families than a beautiful, locally grown hanging basket or colorful planter."

"We always have new plants and products but also focus on tried and true items that have a track record of being reliable for Massachusetts gardeners," said Jim Connolly, Massachusetts-Certified Horticulturalist, MNLA president and owner of Northeast Nurseries in Peabody.

DAR's [MassGrown & Fresher Google Interactive Map](#) features a list of over [125 local garden centers](#) across the Commonwealth, allowing consumers to easily find ALL of their locally grown needs in one convenient one-stop-shopping spot.

DAR's mission is to ensure the long-term viability of local agriculture in Massachusetts. Through its four divisions – Agricultural Development, Animal Health, Crop and Pest Services, and Technical Assistance – the DAR strives to support, regulate and enhance the Commonwealth's agricultural community, working to promote economically and environmentally sound food safety and animal health measures, and fulfill agriculture's role in energy conservation and production. For more information, visit DAR's website at www.mass.gov/agr, and/or follow at twitter.com/mdarcommish.

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